

House Republican Press Release

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O'Neill Votes for Environmental Land Review



Bill Would Require Review of Resources by DEP on Unneeded Land

HARTFORD – Representative Arthur J. O'Neill (R-Southbury), Ranking Member of the Appropriations Committee, voted last week in favor of a measure that requires the State Department of Environmental Protection to conduct an environmental review of unneeded state land if it may have significant natural resources or a public recreational value. Based on that review, the commissioner of DEP must recommend to the secretary of the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) whether all or a portion of the land should be preserved by transfer to DEP or a third party. The commissioner may recommend that any transfer contain restrictions or conditions, or that a conservation easement be granted. The bill had been referred to the Appropriations Committee by the state Senate.

“This measure allows the DEP to review land in the possession of various state agencies and departments, and evaluate whether it has any value either as a natural resource or a site for recreation,” said Rep. O'Neill. “This legislation provides an opportunity to recapture certain parcels of state land which may have been previously identified as without use, and preserve and protect them if they have value.”

Provisions of the bill require environmental reviews and resulting recommendations to appear in the *Environmental Monitor*, the Council on Environmental Quality's twice-monthly publication, and provide for a written public comment period.

Under current law state agencies, departments, and institutions notify the OPM secretary in writing when they have unneeded property. Before deciding to treat the property as surplus, the secretary arranges for the agency controlling it to transfer custody and control to the Department of Public Works and notifies all state agencies of its availability. Any interested agency has 90 days after receiving the notice to submit a plan to the OPM secretary showing how it would use the property, a timetable for using it, and a budget. The DPW commissioner is responsible for disposing of surplus property.